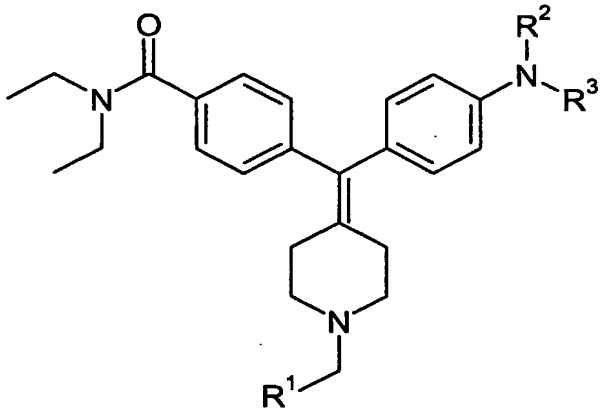
What is claimed is :

1. A compound of formula I, a pharmaceutically acceptable salt thereof, diastereomers, enantiomers, or mixtures thereof:



I

wherein

R^1 is selected from C_{6-10}aryl and C_{2-6}heteroaryl, wherein said C_{6-10}aryl and C_{2-6}heteroaryl are optionally substituted with one or more groups selected from -R, $-NO_2$, -OR, -Cl, -Br, -I, -F, $-CF_3$, -C(=O)R, -C(=O)OH, $-NH_2$, -SH, -NHR, $-NR_2$, -SR, $-SO_3H$, $-SO_2R$, -S(=O)R, -CN, -OH, -C(=O)OR, $-C(=O)NR_2$, -NRC(=O)R, and -NRC(=O)-OR, wherein R is, independently, a hydrogen or C_{1-6}alkyl;

R^2 is selected from C_{1-3}alkyl and hydrogen; and

R^3 is selected from hydrogen, $-C(=O)-R^4$, $-S(=O)_2-R^4$, and $-C(=O)-O-R^4$, wherein R^4 is selected from –H, C_{1-6}alkyl, C_{2-6}alkenyl and C_{2-6}alkynyl.

2. A compound according to claim 1,

wherein R^1 is selected from phenyl; thiadiazolyl, pyridyl; thienyl; furyl; imidazolyl; triazolyl; pyrrolyl; thiazolyl; and N-oxido-pyridyl, wherein said R^1 is further optionally substituted with one or more groups selected from C_{1-6}alkyl, halogenated C_{1-6}alkyl, $-NO_2$, $-CF_3$, C_{1-6} alkoxy, chloro, fluoro, bromo, and iodo;

R^2 is selected from C_{1-3}alkyl and hydrogen; and

R^3 is selected from hydrogen, $-C(=O)-R^4$, $-S(=O)_2-R^4$, and $-C(=O)-O-R^4$, wherein R^4 is C_{1-6}alkyl.

3. A compound according to claim 1,

wherein R^1 is selected from phenyl; pyridyl; thiadiazolyl and thiazolyl, wherein R^1 is further optionally substituted with one or more groups selected from C_{1-6}alkyl, halogenated C_{1-6}alkyl, $-NO_2$, $-CF_3$, C_{1-6} alkoxy, chloro, fluoro, bromo, and iodo;

R^2 is hydrogen; and

R^3 is selected from hydrogen, $-C(=O)-R^4$, $-S(=O)_2-R^4$, and $-C(=O)-O-R^4$, wherein R^4 is C_{1-3}alkyl.

4. A compound according to claim 1, wherein

wherein R^1 is selected from phenyl; 2-fluorophenyl; 3-fluorophenyl; 4-fluorophenyl; 2-pyridyl; 3-pyridyl; 4-pyridyl; 1,2,3-thiadiazol-4-yl; 4-thiazolyl and 5-thiazolyl;

R^2 is hydrogen; and

R^3 is selected from hydrogen, $-C(=O)-CH_3$, $-S(=O)_2-CH_3$, and $-C(=O)-O-CH_3$.

5. A compound according to claim 1, wherein the compound is selected from:

4-[(4-aminophenyl)(1-benzylpiperidin-4-ylidene)methyl]-*N,N*-diethylbenzamide;

4-[[4-(acetylamino)phenyl](1-benzylpiperidin-4-ylidene)methyl]-*N,N*-diethylbenzamide;

4-{[4-(acetylamino)phenyl][1-(pyridin-2-ylmethyl)piperidin-4-ylidene]methyl}-*N,N*-diethylbenzamide;

4-{[4-(acetylamino)phenyl][1-(pyridin-3-ylmethyl)piperidin-4-ylidene]methyl}-*N,N*-diethylbenzamide;

4-{[4-(acetylamino)phenyl][1-(pyridin-4-ylmethyl)piperidin-4-ylidene]methyl}-*N,N*-diethylbenzamide;

4-{[4-(acetylamino)phenyl][1-(1,2,3-thiadiazol-4-ylmethyl)piperidin-4-ylidene]methyl}-*N,N*-diethylbenzamide;

4-{[4-(acetylamino)phenyl][1-(1,3-thiazol-5-ylmethyl)piperidin-4-ylidene]methyl}-*N,N*-diethylbenzamide;

4-{[4-(acetylamino)phenyl][1-(1,3-thiazol-4-ylmethyl)piperidin-4-ylidene]methyl}-*N,N*-diethylbenzamide;

4-((1-benzylpiperidin-4-ylidene){4-[(methylsulfonyl)amino]phenyl}methyl)-*N,N*-diethylbenzamide;

methyl 4-((1-benzylpiperidin-4-ylidene){4-[(diethylamino)carbonyl]phenyl}methyl)phenylcarbamate;

4-{[4-(acetylamino)phenyl][1-(2-fluorobenzyl)piperidin-4-ylidene]methyl}-*N,N*-diethylbenzamide;

4-{[4-(acetylamino)phenyl][1-(3-fluorobenzyl)piperidin-4-ylidene]methyl}-*N,N*-diethylbenzamide;

4-{[4-(acetylamino)phenyl][1-(4-fluorobenzyl)piperidin-4-ylidene]methyl}-*N,N*-diethylbenzamide;

and pharmaceutically acceptable salts thereof.

6. A compound according to any one of claims 1-5 for use as a medicament.

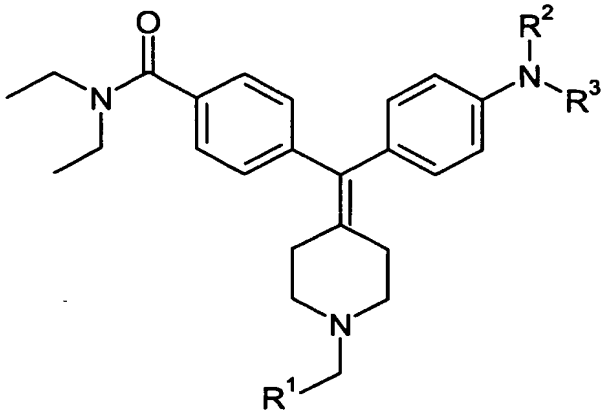
7. The use of a compound according to any one of claims 1-5 in the manufacture of a medicament for the therapy of pain, anxiety or functional gastrointestinal disorders.

8. A pharmaceutical composition comprising a compound according to any one of claims 1-5 and a pharmaceutically acceptable carrier.

9. A method for the therapy of pain in a warm-blooded animal, comprising the step of administering to said animal in need of such therapy a therapeutically effective amount of a compound according to any one of claims 1-5.

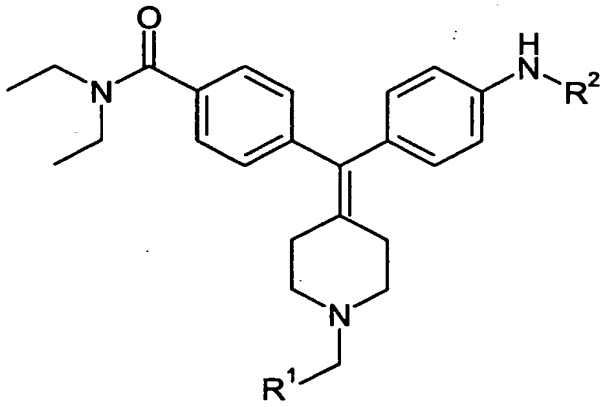
10. A method for the therapy of functional gastrointestinal disorders in a warm-blooded animal, comprising the step of administering to said animal in need of such therapy a therapeutically effective amount of a compound according to any one of claims 1-5.

11. A process for preparing a compound of formula I, comprising:



I

reacting a compound of formula II with X-R^3 or R^3-O-R^3:



II

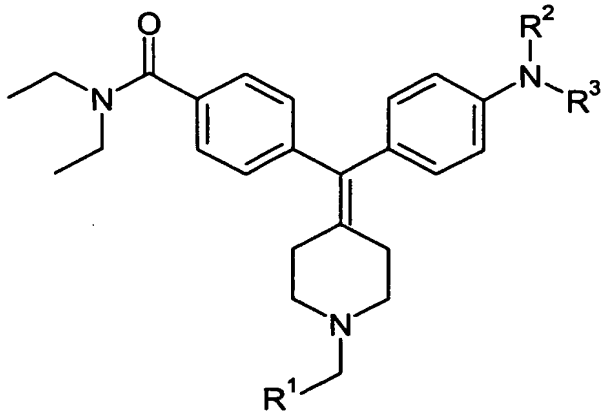
wherein X is halogen;

R^1 is selected from C_{6-10}aryl and C_{2-6}heteroaryl, wherein said C_{6-10}aryl and C_{2-6}heteroaryl are optionally substituted with one or more groups selected from -R, $-NO_2$, -OR, -Cl, -Br, -I, -F, $-CF_3$, -C(=O)R, -C(=O)OH, $-NH_2$, -SH, -NHR, $-NR_2$, -SR, $-SO_3H$, $-SO_2R$, -S(=O)R, -CN, -OH, -C(=O)OR, $-C(=O)NR_2$, -NRC(=O)R, and -NRC(=O)-OR, wherein R is, independently, a hydrogen or C_{1-6}alkyl;

R^2 is selected from C_{1-3}alkyl and hydrogen; and

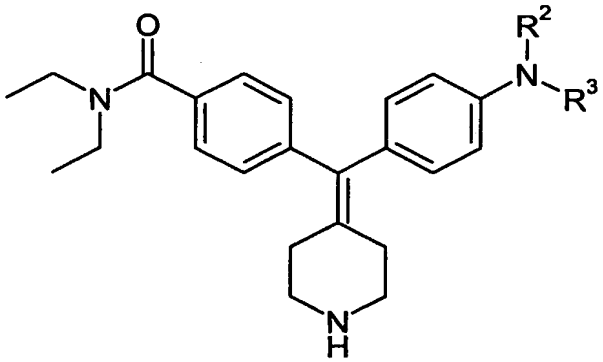
R^3 is selected from -C(=O)-R^4, $-S(=O)_2$-R^4, and –C(=O)-O-R^4, wherein R^4 is selected from –H, C_{1-6}alkyl, C_{2-6}alkenyl and C_{2-6}alkynyl.

12. A process for preparing a compound of formula I, comprising:



I

reacting a compound of formula III with R^1-CHO:



III

wherein R^1 is selected from C_{6-10}aryl and C_{2-6}heteroaryl, wherein said C_{6-10}aryl and C_{2-6}heteroaryl are optionally substituted with one or more groups selected from -R, $-NO_2$, -OR, -Cl, -Br, -I, -F, $-CF_3$, -C(=O)R, -C(=O)OH, $-NH_2$, -SH, -NHR, $-NR_2$, -SR, $-SO_3H$, $-SO_2R$, -S(=O)R, -CN, -OH, -C(=O)OR, $-C(=O)NR_2$, -NRC(=O)R, and -NRC(=O)-OR, wherein R is, independently, a hydrogen or C_{1-6}alkyl;

R^2 is selected from C_{1-3}alkyl and hydrogen; and

R^3 is selected from $-C(=O)-R^4$, $-S(=O)_2-R^4$, and $-C(=O)-O-R^4$, wherein R^4 is selected from –H, C_{1-6}alkyl, C_{2-6}alkenyl and C_{2-6}alkynyl.

13. A process for preparing a compound of formula I, comprising:

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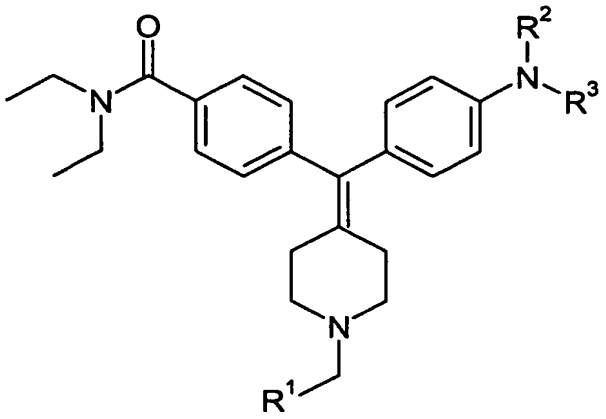
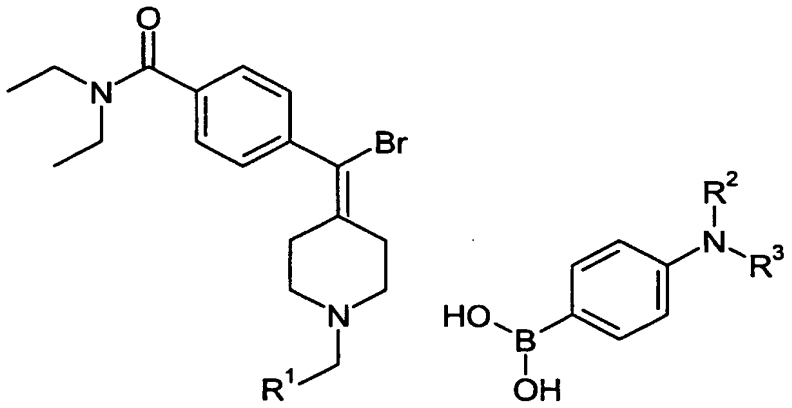


I

reacting a compound of formula IV with a compound of formula V or esters thereof:



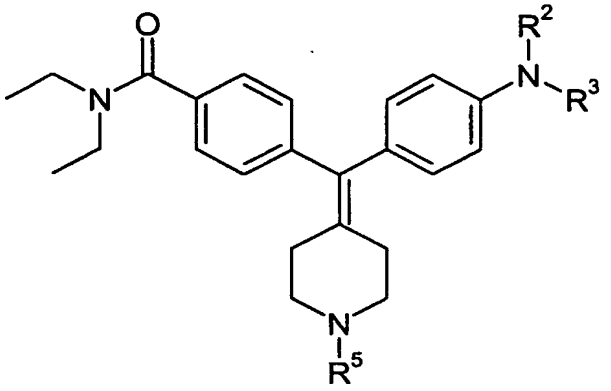
IV V

wherein R^1 is selected from C_{6-10}aryl and C_{2-6}heteroaryl, wherein said C_{6-10}aryl and C_{2-6}heteroaryl are optionally substituted with one or more groups selected from -R, $-NO_2$, -OR, -Cl, -Br, -I, -F, $-CF_3$, -C(=O)R, -C(=O)OH, $-NH_2$, -SH, -NHR, $-NR_2$, -SR, $-SO_3H$, $-SO_2R$, -S(=O)R, -CN, -OH, -C(=O)OR, $-C(=O)NR_2$, -NRC(=O)R, and -NRC(=O)-OR, wherein R is, independently, a hydrogen or C_{1-6}alkyl;

R^2 is selected from C_{1-3}alkyl and hydrogen; and

R^3 is selected from –H, $-C(=O)-R^4$, $-S(=O)_2-R^4$, and $-C(=O)-O-R^4$, wherein R^4 is selected from –H, C_{1-6}alkyl, C_{2-6}alkenyl and C_{2-6}alkynyl.

14. A compound of formula VI, a pharmaceutically acceptable salt thereof, diastereomers, enantiomers, or mixtures thereof:



VI

wherein R^2 is selected from C_{1-3}alkyl and hydrogen;

R^3 is selected from hydrogen, -C(=O)-R^4, -S(=O)$_2$-R^4, and –C(=O)-O-R^4, wherein R^4 is selected from –H, C_{1-6}alkyl, C_{2-6}alkenyl and C_{2-6}alkynyl; and

R^5 is selected from hydrogen and –C(=O)-O-C_{1-6}alkyl.